

Recovering the Crew Overboard

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In a previous issue we discussed showing the crew how to return to pick up the skipper who has fallen off the boat. Once you have made contact with the overboard crew (COB), the next challenge is getting the person back on the boat. The crew must be prepared to cope with a person who is not able to assist either because of injury or hypothermia.

If you don't have a "**Life sling**" mounted on your stern pulpit, consider adding this valuable piece of safety gear. It is a ready-to-launch wraparound float with 50 feet of attached polypropylene (floating) line. Use it to bring the person alongside then use it as a lifting harness to get the person aboard.

It is unlikely the short handed crew will be able to lift a wet, unassisting person aboard. Some form of lifting device is needed. You can purchase a single purpose block and tackle for your Lifesling but we rigged our boom vang with snap shackles at both ends for easy removal. Use a halyard to give the block and tackle adequate loft so the hoisted person will clear the deck. Lead the running end of the tackle through a jib block to the jib winch to hoist the person out of the water. Take care to prevent the person from being swung into the boat as you hoist.

Since you have a good first aid kit and you are medically trained (because you followed the recommendations in last month's Safety Afloat), you will know how to deal with any injuries or hypothermia suffered by the crew member as a result of going overboard.

Have fun out there... and stay on the boat!